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Message Text

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15
ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 L-02 PM-03 SPC-01 AID-10 OMB-01

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R 070635Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6901
INFO JCS
CINCPAC

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 8300

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MCAP, LA
SUBJECT: INTEGRATION OF FORMER LIF AND REDUCED
US SUPPORT IN MR II

1. WE HAVE BEEN MOVING FOR OVER A YEAR TO REDUCE US SUPPORT FOR MR II, AND INTEGRATE ITS FORMER LIF PERSONNEL INTO THE RLGAF, IN ORDER TO ADAPT THE RLGAF STRUCTURE, AND US MISSION EFFORTS, TO THE SITUATION CREATED BY THE SIGNING OF THE LAO AGREEMENTS AND THE EFFECTIVE CEASEFIRE WHICH NOW PREVAILS IN THE COUNTRY.

2. IN PURSUANCE OF THESE AIMS, I DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT WITH MR II CG VANG PAO ON DECEMBER 5. I EXPLAINED TO VANG PAO THAT, BECAUSE OF THE BUMPER RICE HARVEST IN MANY NON-MILITARY DEPENDENT REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS IN MR II, WE COULD HALT RICE-DROPS IN SEVERAL AREAS BUT WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT BOUAM LONG, NAM HOUI (LS 360 UF 8975), AND MR II MILITARY DEPENDENTS. I MADE CLEAR THAT WE CERTAINLY WOULD NOT PERMIT ANYONE TO GO HUNGRY IN MR II.
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3. WE THEN TOOK UP THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE NEED TO INTEGRATE THE FOMRER LIF IN MR II INTO THE FORMAL RLGAF STRUCTURE; PRIMARILY THE NEED TO REGULARIZE THE SWOLLEN LIF RANK STRUCTURE, REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE FORMER

LIF, INCLUDING VILLAGE DEFENSE FORCES (ADO/ADC), AND TERMINATE THE COMBAT BONUS. VANG PAO SAID HE COULD CUT ABOUT 4,000 ADO/ADC PERSONNEL BEFORE FY 74 AND COULD SOLVE THE RANK PROBLEM BY SECURING ROYAL COMMISSIONS FOR MARGINAL OFFICERS AND THEN RETIRING THEM MANDATORILY. HE UNDERSTOOD FULLY THE NEED FOR LIF INTEGRATION, AGREED WITH THE PROJECTED FY 74 CEILING OF 60,000 IN THE RLGAF, AND DID NOT ENVISAGE DIFFICULTIES WITH RLGAF HEADQUARTERS ON THE QUESTION. VANG PAO PROMISED TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS WITH ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER SISOUK.

4. THE COMBAT BONUS QUESTION, HOWEVER, CUT CLOSER TO THE BONE. VANG PAO EMPHASIZED THE POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF THE BONUS, STATING THAT THE FORMER LIF SALARY SCHEDULE IN MR II HAD BEEN EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF THE RLGAF SINCE 1971, AND THUS HIS SOLDIERS WOULD FIND THEMSELVES IN DIFFICULT FINANCIAL STRAITS WHEN THE BONUS WAS TERMINATED. HE ADDED THAT THE DECEMBER 4 MR COMMANDERS MEETING HAD RECOMMENDED THAT THE BONUS BE STOPPED IN MRS I, III AND IV IN MARCH AND APRIL AND ONLY STOPPED IN MR AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR.

5. I TOLD VANG PAO THAT WHILE WE COULD NOT DISCONTINUE THE BONUS IN JANUARY, AND WOULD CERTAINLY CONSIDER THE MR COMMANDERS RECOMMENDATION CAREFULLY, CONTINUING THE COMBAT BONUS ANYWHERE IN LAOS UNTIL JUNE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION. INTEGRATION OF LIF DEPENDED ON STOPPING THE BONUS AND HAD TO BE EFFECTED IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, DURING WHICH FORMER LIF WOULD GO ON RLGAF PAY SCALES. THIS COULD NOT BE DONE INSTANTANEOUSLY AT THE END OF JUNE. INSTEAD A PHASED PROGRAM HAD TO BE DEVELOPED NOW TO EFFECT INTEGRATION AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

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6. VANG PAO AGREED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH SISOUK AND CONFER WITH ME AGAIN AFTER MY RETURN TO LAOS IN LATE DECEMBER. ALTHOUGH HE TALKED BRIEFLY OF RESIGNING, HE WAS IN RELATIVELY GOOD SPIRITS DURING OUR MEETING AND OBVIOUSLY IS BEGINNING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN INTEGRATING HIS FORMER "PRIVATE ARMY" INTO THE RLGAF, A NECESSITY WHICH HE FULLY SUPPORTS.

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WHITEHOUSE

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